

114 chiefly at Tenejapa and Cancuc. In 1925 Blom and LaFarge¹ entered the Tzeltal country from the north, visiting Bachajón, Sivaca, Tenango, Cancuc, Tenejapa, and Amatenango. These authors have published a short general account² of the culture of these people. In 1928 the John Geddings Gray Memorial Expedition of the Tulane University of Louisiana passed through the villages of Ococingo and Sivaca, and visited the hacienda "El Real." At this last place Carlos Basauri, a member of the expedition, collected notes on the Tzeltals.³ Marcos E. Becerra, who was for ten years head of the Department of Public Education of Chiapas, assembled information on the languages, ethnography, and history of the Indians of the highlands and of other parts of the state. Dr. Ruth Bunzel has spent some time recently in the region; her materials are unpublished.

101 361 The Tzeltal-speaking communities may be divided into those situated in the highlands (Amatenango, Chanal, Tenejapa, Cancuc, Oxchuc, San Martín, and Tenango) and those situated at less than 1000 m. above sea level and that consequently enjoy a warmer climate (Sivaca, Ococingo, Bachajón, Citlala, Guaquepec, Chilon, Yajalón, and Petalcingo).

133 In general the State of Chiapas is highly dissected and mountainous. It is crossed from east to west with three cordilleras, with subdivisions into various branches which cross with one another to form a complicated orographic system. The ranges which cross the Tzeltal region are those belonging to the Cordillera de Hueitepec, reaching an altitude of 2597 m. above sea level⁴ in a mountain of this name situated east of the city of Las Casas. With the exception of some [361] Chamula settlements, this is the settlement of greatest altitude (2210 m. above sea level)⁵ in the entire state. From this point and continuing northward are to be found the other pueblos Villa visited. The land decreases in altitude until it reaches the Ococingo Valley where there is a sharp descent of 600 m. From here on, the terrain is not so dissected and the altitude is less than 1000 m. above sea level and becomes gradually less.

132 [823] As is natural, the climates of these two zones present marked differences which have given rise to the expressions "tierra fría" and "tierra caliente" by which the natives distinguish them. The former refers to the higher region where, according to Amram,⁶ "The temperature rarely falls below freezing, though in November, 1935, it dropped as low as 24° F. During the long dry period, when for weeks at a time no rain falls, the temperature in the shade occasionally rises above 75°, and the temperature in the sun may reach well over 100°. The relative humidity is low, and there are great differences between shade and sun temperatures. The nights are cool."⁷

The region of the tierra caliente begins in the Valley of Ococingo and the temperature rises as one goes northward. At Salto de Agua, 73 m. above sea level, one experiences tropical heat.

¹ Blom and LaFarge, 1927.

² *Ibid.*, 2: 324-400.

³ Basauri, 1927.

⁴ Becerra, 1932 and 1933.

⁵ Emeterio Pineda, 1845, p. 20. See also Washel, 1935, pp. 160-27.

Santibañez, 1911, p. 7.

⁶ Emeterio Pineda, 1845, p. 20.

⁷ Blom and LaFarge, 1927, 2: 418.

⁸ *Ibid.*, 2: 377.

⁹ Amram, 1937, p. 52.

BACHAJON COUNTRY

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saw houses and fields, lying away from the trail, and at a bend before us in the distance a perpendicular wall of yellow and red rock, about 400 meters high, framed in green foliage. A vertical, shining white band, the waterfall "Chegua," cut the center of the red cliff.

Toward evening we made camp by a small stream not far below the rim of the valley, 980 meters above sea level, and rolled ourselves in our blankets just as a downpour started to drum on our tent-fly.

Early in the morning a few Bachajon Indians came stealthily out of the bush to look at our strange outfit. They talked with our Indian carriers, and evidently found out that we were not bad people, as they soon came near to our camp to talk with us.

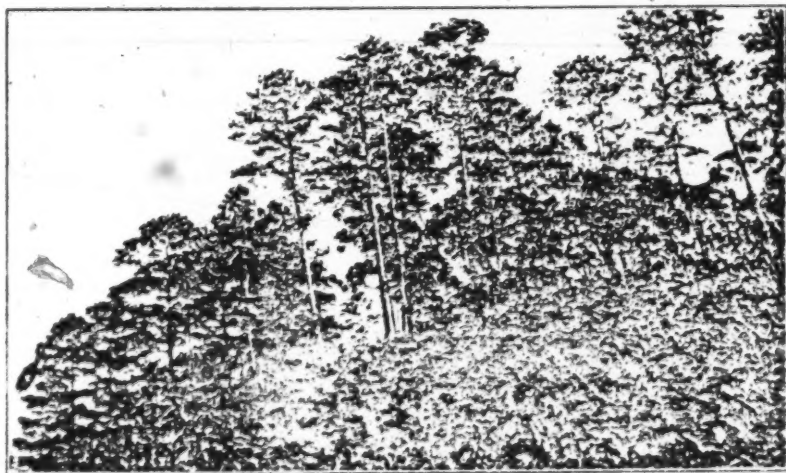


FIG. 195.—Bachajon, Chis. Pine Forest.

It was a cool morning and the bottom of the valley was hidden under great soft banks of white mists with the mountains appearing above in sharp silhouette against the morning sky. Soon we reached the rim of the valley and looking back towards the north, saw the many mountain ranges we had crossed and also the Don Juan mountain along the foot of which we rode towards Palenque.

The vegetation changed to low oak-like bush over ground covered with fern-like moss and pretty wild iris. As we rode downward to the next valley new mountain ranges appeared before us and we could see the pine country at a distance. There is no transition from tropical vegetation to pine forest. Change in soil is

CANCUC VILLAGE

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boulders with care. It still is broad in most places, and has reason-
able grades. We climbed to a rather desolate upland of wind-swept
grass with a few crooked trees. There was some traffic on the road.
We passed a group of Tenejapeños going down to the hot country
to carry sugar. The men were ragged and woolly, like those we had
seen at Salto de Agua, and their women, in short blue skirts and
white blouses gorgeously ornamented with gold and crimson silk,
were remarkable for their very pink cheeks showing through dark
brown colouring.

The town of Cancuc (*kank'uk*) lies on the rounded shoulder of
a long ridge that juts up above the high moors commanding a tre-
mendous view North, West, and South over a jumbled mass of
mountain ranges, like a herd of great elephants shouldering away
to the horizon. A wind blows day and night, the trees are small and
stunted, and the general effect is one of bleakness and height. At
an altitude of 1,440 meters, with the unrelenting wind, it is always
cold. The highroad climbs from a ravine up into the village where
a small plaza is laid out on a level place. On our left was the big,
white church, still well preserved. Opposite it, the Cabildo sur-
prised us, a neat building with tile roof and white columned portico,
built in President Diaz' time. Round about were some tumbling and
ruined huts, and behind, the village rose on rough terraces crudely
faced with stone.

Cancuc has a stormy history. It was the center of the famous
rebellion of 1712, the subject of Brinton's "Maria Candelaria."*
According to Starr (1904) who passed through here, there is a tra-
dition that the men's long hair, covering their ears, is so worn in
memory of the clipped ears which their ancestors received at that
time. Recently, there has been political dissension in the form of
a dragging feud, and a series of small fights and murders has re-
sulted in those left of the defeated party abandoning the village and
setting up their houses in the bush. It is from this that one sees
so many huts deserted and beginning to disintegrate, adding to the
general cheerless aspect of the place.

We were well received at the Cabildo, where the village officials
with their silver-headed canes turned up shortly to look us over.
They were younger men than most of the officials we had met
previously, and a pretty tough looking crew, much what one would
expect of a group that had attained office largely by means of the
machete. The people on the whole rather resemble the Bachajon
physically, being of a small-limbed type with an average height for
men of about 160 centimeters, and nearly beardless. The men wear
tunics cut as at Tenango, but decorated with red and yellow em-

*Brinton, 1897; Pineda, 1888.

Traditional Economic Activities

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there is no other woman in the house. (c) Number of men in the family. If there are productively employed men, women of the household tend to make less pottery, since they are busy cooking and washing and have their basic subsistence needs supplied. Pottery is then produced to supply cash for fiestas only. Widows make a great deal of pottery since they must either hire men to work in the milpa or buy corn.

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2. Wealth of the family: Relatively wealthy families make almost no pottery. In other cases, the scheduling of production is related to consumption needs. Figure 2 charts the pottery production by type of item produced for a family which included two unmarried women, their mother, father, and grandmother. The peaks in production occur just before the major fiestas when the family wants additional money to buy meat, fruits, and clothing. Although this family produced more pottery than the majority of households because of the presence of four women, its production typifies the high periods of activity relating to the fiestas. Production is also related to the seasonal changes: during the rainy season (from June to October) many households curtail production, except to earn money for the fiesta of Santiago (July 25), because of the difficulty of firing without closed kilns.

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Variation in production means that an overall estimate of income from pottery cannot be made. It ranges from none to nearly 90 percent of family income in the case of widows without land or male helpers. I would guess that an average family might earn 200 pesos a year, about 10 to 15 percent of the money value of crops. One family of two widows and five children who work constantly throughout the year averages an income of about 600 pesos, or about one-half what an agriculturist can make on one-half hectare of land.

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THE MOTIVATION TO PRODUCE

The motivation to work is tied directly to consumption needs of the household. Failure to meet expenditures with income from agriculture and pottery is met by men hiring out as agricultural workers or as laborers in the sawmill. This alternative is chosen over that of increasing the size

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8: Hunt E-4,5 (1958)1962

NV9 Tzeltal NV9
Amatenango
Aguacatenango

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131 American Highway which connects San Cristobal de las Casas with
361 Comitán. They are 50 and 44 kilometers, respectively, from San
[491] Cristobal. Aguacatenango is closer to the branch road that con-
tinues south from the Highway to Venustiano Carranza, in the low-
lands.

361 Both villages are 2,000 meters above sea level, placed in
133 a slightly raised terrain in the valley floor.

137 The vegetation climaxes surrounding the settlements are
the same: woodlands of pine and oak, the second predominating,
grasslands which for the most part are secondary growths in abandoned
agricultural plots, and thorny bushes which the inhabitants of the
valleys utilize for building fences.

241 The range of cultivated plants is the same in the two vil-
137 lages, including several varieties of corn and beans, squash and
a few greens, while other edible plants grow wild in the edges of
streams and rocky places unsuited for cultivation (Kaplan in
McQuown et al., 1959, Part II, Section 6).

134 The soils are mainly limestone base, calcareous clay loam
• 132 and loam transported, both territories receiving the same amount
133 of rain. Surface water is drained internally within the basin of
136 the Rio Blanco, and in the edges of the village of Aguacatenango,
forms, during the rainy season, a small lagoon, where a variety of
small fish thrive (Wagner, in McQuown et al., 1959, Part II, Sec-
tion 5).

136 The fauna include small deer, ocelots, snakes (poisonous
and non-poisonous), domestic and field rats, and other small
animals.